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ENCLOSURE II

27 May 1949

General Notes on Soviet Armed Forces

1. ARMED FORCES - General

As during World War II, the Ground Forces continue to be the senior and most important arm of the Soviet Armed Forces. The Ground Forces bore the brunt of the war and their capabilities are fully understood by the Soviets as is not the case with Naval or Strategic Air Forces.

In the spring of 1946, the Soviets reorganized the structure of their Armed Forces. The Army, including its air arm, was integrated into a single Ministry of Armed Forces together with the Navy; the ground, air, and naval forces and the supply organization all became de jure equal components of the new unified Armed Forces. The new organization presages an increased importance for the Air Forces especially, and also for the Navy, but it is significant that the present Armed Forces General Staff consists almost entirely of ground force officers.

For centuries, including the World War II period, Russian strategy was one of attrition - a defensive strategy depending on an initial gambit of yielded space, followed by eventual decisive counterattack. Reorganization of the high command and the tactical units of the Soviet Army following the war indicates that the offensive is receiving increasing emphasis in Soviet strategic thought. A new ground Army organized along offensive lines, supplemented by increasingly powerful Air Forces and a Navy strengthened at least in specialized lines, will conform to the position of hemispheric military predominance into which the Soviet Union moved as a result of World War II.

A salient weakness in the Armed Forces organization, as now constituted, is the lack of balance between the three services. In spite of the changed post-war strategic situation, Army thinking seems destined to shape Soviet military policy to a greater extent than circumstances now warrant. The Soviet military leaders' experience gives them little background in strategic air war and in large-scale naval operations. In addition to this fundamental weakness, two others come to mind: The morale of the Soviet soldiers is not entirely satisfactory now, and is a large factor of potential weakness. The other weakness, of course, is the lack of the atomic bomb.

2. GROUND FORCES

The Soviet Ground Forces emerged from World War II as a mass infantry - artillery army, with proportionately small mobile elements.

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Three and a half years of post-war reorganization have achieved a fundamental change in ground forces composition, with a much greater proportion of mobile units. Battle-worn and obsolescent equipment is being replaced. Logistical support, though still one of the weakest elements, is being strengthened. An intensive and continuous training program is raising professional and technical standards.

Soviet heavy tanks and heavy mortars have no foreign equal, and their 100-mm anti-tank gun is an extraordinarily effective piece. Since VE-Day they have reequipped many of their units with most modern weapons and have added to their stockpile as well. In technical equipment, however, the Soviets have many deficiencies, including such categories as radar, optical instruments, and heavy engineer construction equipment. It is estimated, however, that within four to six years they will be able to solve their major developmental and production problems in ground force technical equipment.

### 3. AIR FORCES

The Air Forces of the USSR comprise five operational air organizations - each of which is apparently independent of the others. They are: The Soviet or Military Air Force, the Long Range Force, The Fighter Defense Force, The Naval Air Force, and The Civil Air Fleet.

Inasmuch as the bulk of Soviet air activity in World War II was devoted to ground support, it may be said that the Military Air Force composed of the fifteen Tactical Air Armies and numbering 10,000 aircraft represents the strong suit of Soviet air power. However, while most of the operational units are and probably will continue to be tactical in nature, present priorities are being given to the two "weak-sister" forces of World War II: The Fighter Defense Force (2,100 aircraft) and The Long Range Force (1,800 aircraft). These are being rapidly modernized. The interceptor fighter force has already received a sizable number of jet fighters and the long-range bomber force is evidently being re-equipped with a Soviet version of the B-29.

The Naval Air Force is an integral part of the Navy. Similarly organized and employing generally the same types of aircraft and equipment as the Tactical Air Armies, the Fleet Air Forces may be considered, in effect, as coastal air armies. Limitations imposed by a complete lack of carriers will keep naval air units confined to shore-based operations in the foreseeable future. In brief, the Naval Air Force will be of little or no value in long-range naval warfare but should be reasonably effective against targets within operational range of Soviet-controlled shores.

Nominally a civilian air organization, the Civil Air Fleet (3,000 aircraft) is organized along military lines and is similarly run. In the broadest sense it controls all non-military aircraft

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in the Soviet Union. Its importance stems from the fact that in time of war its units would provide the air-lift required for airborne attack and the normal air transport of men and material incident to military operations. An extensive modernization program is under way within the Civil Air Fleet.

4. NAVY

The two principal weaknesses of the Soviet Navy are traditional subordination to the Ground Forces and inherent lack of technical skill. During World War II, the Soviet Navy experienced little combat except in the Arctic Ocean, the Barents Sea and the White Sea. Therefore, shortage of combat-experienced personnel is acute.

While the morale of the Soviet Navy is good and it has few deserters than either the Ground or Air Forces, the officer-enlisted man relationship still has not been fully ironed out. The division of naval personnel into officers and ratings only took place in 1943. In both categories promotion continues to be based more on political than on professional reliability. The officer corps lacks homogeneity and does not possess the technical power which exists in other major navies.

The inferiority complex which the Soviet Navy suffers is evident even in the flag rank. The admirals in the Soviet Navy are not accorded the same privileges or deference as their opposite numbers in the Ground or Air Forces.

Tactically, ships and small units are well handled at sea but operations and training are generally limited and do not include large fleet or force maneuvers. The submarine service is considered the "elite" branch of the Soviet Navy and comprises the highest type available personnel, but, like surface and land units, suffers deficiency of personnel in proper employment of modern weapons and equipment.

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